



## **PRELIMINARY REPORT**

### **HIGHWAY**

### **HWY13MH003**

*The information in this report is preliminary and will be supplemented or corrected during the course of the investigation.*

About 4:35 p.m. CST, on Thursday, November 15, 2012, a 2006 Peterbilt truck-tractor in combination with a 2005 Transcraft D-Eagle drop-deck semitrailer (combination unit) was traveling southbound on Garfield Street in Midland, Texas. The combination vehicle was being used as a “Hunt for Heroes” parade float, sponsored by the “Show of Support” nonprofit organization honoring U.S. military men and women. The combination unit was owned and operated by Smith Industries. It was driven by a 50-year-old man and occupied by 24 float passengers.

The combination unit was approaching a highway-rail grade crossing equipped with gates and flashing red lights to warn highway users of approaching trains. The grade crossing was owned, operated, and maintained by the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) and was identified by DOT grade crossing inventory no. 796-331L at milepost 554.74 of the UPRR Fort Worth Service Unit, Toyah Subdivision. The combination vehicle entered the grade crossing at an estimated speed of 5 mph.

At the same time, Union Pacific freight train ZLCAI-14, consisting of four locomotives and 84 loaded cars, was traveling eastbound from Los Angeles, California, to Atlanta, Georgia. The train was operated by a 35-year-old engineer and a 27-year-old conductor. A video camera and an external microphone mounted on the lead locomotive recorded the train moving at 62 mph (70 mph track speed restriction) and the combination unit located on the grade crossing as the train approached. The engineer sounded the locomotive horn, placed the train brakes into an emergency application, and traveled 4,143 feet before coming to a stop. As the train occupied the crossing, the right front corner of the locomotive unit struck the semitrailer on the right rear. The combination unit was displaced approximately 30 feet to the south side of the crossing, where it struck a 2008 Ford Crown Victoria, occupied by a deputy for the Midland County Sheriff’s Office.

As a result of the accident, four parade float passengers were killed, and five float passengers were seriously injured. Additionally, eight float passengers and a deputy sheriff received minor injuries. The two train crewmembers, the combination unit driver, and seven other float passengers were not injured.